DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 280 FL 008 586

AUTHOR Blum, Shoshana; Levenston, Eddie
TITLE Strategies of Communication through Lexical Avoidance in the Speech and Writing of Second Language Teachers and Learners and in Translation.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 24pr; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Hebrew; Language Instruction; Language Research; *Language Universals; *Language Usage; Learning Processes; Learning Theories; Linguistic Competence; Native Speakers; Psycholinguistics; *Second Language Learning; *Semantics; Speech Communication; Taxonomy; Translation; Verbal Communication; *Vocabulary
IDENTIFIERS Communication Strategies; Interlanguage; *Lexical Avoidance

ABSTRACT

In a recent paper (1977) Levenston and Blum suggested that lexical simplification operates according to universal principles, and that these derive from the individual's semantic competence in his mother tongue. This paper examines the validity of this suggestion by means of a comparative study of lexical simplification in three different linguistic contexts: (1) in the elicited written responses of second language learners; (2) in the usage of native speakers in their contacts with language learners; and (3) in translations from Hebrew into English. The strategies investigated include: (1) over-generalization (use of superordinate terms, approximation, synonymy, word-coinage, and converseness); (2) transfer; (3) circumlocution and paraphrase; (4) language switch; (5) appeal to authority; (6) change of topic; and (7) semantic avoidance. This taxonomy is compared with similar taxonomies suggested by previous investigators. Five of the strategies are discussed in detail as they appear in all three linguistic situations cited above. (Author/AM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED139280

Strategies of Communication through lexical Avoidance in the Speech and Writing of Second Language Teachers and Learners and in Translation

Shoshana Blum and Eddie Levenston

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1.0 Introduction

In a recent paper (Levenston and Blum 1977) we defined lexical simplification as the process and/or the result of making do with less words, and pointed out that it can be studied in a number of linguistic contexts. Among those mentioned were: i) the speech and writing of second language learners, ii) the speech and writing of teachers, or other native speakers when simplifying "texts" for non-native speakers, and iii) translation. We suggested that lexical simplification operates according to universal principles, and that these derive from the individual's semantic competence in his mother-tongue.

The present paper examines the validity of this suggestion by means of a comparative study of lexical simplification in three different linguistic contexts:

i) in the elicited written responses of second language learners (Levenston and Blum 1976) [1]

ii) in the usage of native speakers in their contacts with language learners, whether in speech or in writing, i.e. by teachers (of Hebrew to adults) [2] and by editors of simplified texts (Blum 1979).

iii) in translations from Hebrew into English (Blum 1971 - also Wonderly 1968).

The basic similarity between these three different linguistic contexts is that in all of them the speaker or writer has to make do with less words. The vocabulary at the learner's disposal is at all stages smaller than that of the native speaker. The teacher, especially of beginners, restricts his vocabulary to those items he expects the students to know; these items are often available in the form of a list, which serves as the basis for preparing simplified reading texts, in Hebrew and in English. The situation is slightly different in translation. The smaller number of words available to

1) All the responses elicited by the experiment have been examined in detail for the purposes of the current article; the original paper reports only those responses relevant to the specific hypotheses then under investigation.

2) Examples of teachers' usages were collected by Ariela Arad and Pazia Sela during observation of classes of adult learners.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

the translator derives not from any difference in the absolute numbers of lexical items but rather from the anisomorphism of the systems of verbal reference; in any given pair of languages there always exist lexical voids where one language lacks a designatory term found in the other.

Learners, teachers, text-adaptors and translators thus share the obligation to express meaning while avoiding certain lexical items that are not at their disposal. From the ways by which lexical items in natural languages can substitute for each other in specific contexts derive the strategies of lexical simplification common to these diverse linguistic contexts. The universal principles involved are probably based on systemic relationships between lexical items such as hyponymy, synonymy, antonymy and converseness. The awareness of these relationships, together with the ability to use circumlocution and paraphrase, is part of every speaker's semantic competence and enables him, when the need arises, to express complex meanings by indirect means. Our hope is that by comparing strategies of lexical simplification in such diverse linguistic contexts as language learning and translation we shall be able to discover the universal principles involved, the ways by which these principles are implemented as strategies of communication and the possible effects on communication in the various situations. Our main concern remains the domain of language learning: it is in order to understand why and how strategies of communication through lexical avoidance operate in interlanguage with varying degrees of success that the comparison with other linguistic contexts is needed.

1.1 Avoidance

The formulation of the title of this paper - "strategies of communication through lexical avoidance..." - is meant to suggest that avoidance is not a single "strategy of communication" but rather the motivating factor behind various strategies. The factor common to all cases of lexical simplification is the attempt to express meaning while "avoiding" certain lexical items. The term "avoidance" obviously applies with different degrees of appropriateness to the different contexts discussed. It is most appropriate for the teacher, who knows what he is avoiding - least appropriate for the translator, for whom "avoidance" is created by lexical voids in the target language. As for learners, some are in the position of teachers and some in the position of translators, depending on the extent of their knowledge of the target language vocabulary.

Two basic types of avoidance can therefore be distinguished:

i) Apparent avoidance, caused by lack of vocabulary, whether in language learning or in translation

ii) True avoidance, practised by advanced language learners, teachers and editors of simplified texts.

The learner who does not have the vocabulary to express his meaning and the translator faced with a lexical void in the target language use various strategies to fill the semantic gap. One practised by learners is complete abandonment of the subject. "Topic avoidance" (Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker 1976) or Message Abandonment (Váradi 1973) refer to this behaviour. Change of topic or complete silence are clearly strategies of communication, or non-communication, common to contexts of interaction whether between language learners or between native speakers. When used by language learners, these strategies are probably often motivated by the need to avoid unknown lexical items.

True avoidance presupposes choice. Words that the teacher or the editor of simplified texts assumes will be unknown to the student are omitted, replaced or paraphrased. For language learners at the advanced stage, avoidance occurs when the learner has a passive knowledge of lexical alternatives but fails to explain the distinctions in his own speech and writing. The motivation for avoidance at this stage can be morphological (preferring a regular verb to an irregular one), phonological (preferring the word that's easier to pronounce), graphological (preferring in writing the word one knows how to spell) or void avoidance (preferring a word that has a clear translation-equivalent in the mother tongue to one that does not).

The term "avoidance", therefore, apparent or true, can be used to answer two questions: what occurs in the different linguistic contexts and why. Comparison of interlanguage usage, for instance, with expected native-speaker usage in the same context - or of target language with source language in the case of translation - will show what is avoided. Explanations of the kind listed, from morphological to void avoidance, whether postulated by the investigator or given by the learner, will suggest why avoidance takes place. But to answer the question how meaning is conveyed in spite of avoidance, we need to study the various strategies of communication used. The sub-classification of strategies derives from the different kinds of answer to the question "how".

1) Kleinman (1976) restricts the notion of avoidance to this type only.
2) For more detail on these kinds of avoidance see Levenston and Blum (1977). See also Kleinman's study, which focuses on avoidance of grammatical "categories" of the kind we would call "void avoidance".

1.2 Strategies and Processes

The distinction between the terms "strategy" and "process" in the literature of second language acquisition is not very clear. Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976) state, for example, that their goal is "to understand something about the processes and strategies of second language acquisition", but refer in the rest of the paper to various kinds of strategies only. Does this mean that for them the terms are completely synonymous? This is certainly not true of their disctionary meaning, and in our opinion it is worth preserving a distinction when using the terms to analyse interlanguage phenomena. The term strategy (Webster 1961: "use of artifice or stratagem in carrying out some design"), we suggest, should be used when referring to single cases, since process (Webster 1961: "progressive course ... series of measures or changes"), presupposes that a number of operations have taken place.

A single error can indicate a certain strategy. Thus if the error made is traceable to the learner's mother tongue we say that the strategy used has been transfer. But to speak about transfer as a process we have to know to what extent and in which ways the learner's mother tongue has influenced his interlanguage. A series of usages in the same learner's interlanguage, or common to a group of learners, semantically or structurally related, systematic at a single time and/or stable over time and traceable to one or more native languages, indicate a process of transfer. Strategy thus refers to the way the learner arrives at a certain usage at a specific point in time, and process refers to the systematic series of steps by which the learner arrives at the same usage over time.

Processes are inferrable from strategies, just as strategies are inferrable from spoken and written interlanguage production. A single form used as a strategy of communication can either disappear from the learner's speech or become fossilized and part of a stable interlanguage. The distinction becomes clear when we compare lexical simplification by language learners with its occurrence in other linguistic contexts. The use of a hypernym (e.g. "flower" in place of "rose") by a teacher in the classroom is a strategy of communication, used to overcome the learner's lack of vocabulary. The same technique used by the learner at a stage when the needed word is not at his disposal is a strategy of communication. When it appears at a later stage, when he knows both words, it indicates that a process of over-generalization has taken place, which may be leading to fossilization. With teachers, techniques of simplification are always strategies, even when used to excess; with learners, the same strategies may indicate processes of inter-language formation.

Following this distinction, we propose to divide all strategies of lexical simplification in language learning into two groups:

a) strategies that can indicate processes. Usages produced by these are potentially fossilizable.

b) strategies that are situation-bound and do not initiate processes.

Group a: Process-initiating	Group b: Situation-bound
I Over-generalization	
1) Superordinate terms	I Circumlocution and paraphrase
2) Approximation	II Language switch
3) Synonyms	III Appeal to Authority
4) Word coinage	IV Change of topic
5) Converseness	V Semantic avoidance
II Transfer	

As the subdivision in Group a indicates, there are two main processes that create lexical simplification: over-generalization and transfer. Transfer can be either a strategy or a process. Over-generalization, however, is clearly a cognitive process that is not specific to language learning; the different strategies listed as I1 to I5 all indicate over-generalization, since all of them entail disregard for restrictions on meaning and usage.

Most of the strategies in the above list have been reported in the literature of second language acquisitions, though the grouping and to some extent the labelling differ from previous taxonomies.

It seems advisable therefore to compare the different terms proposed in previous research before continuing with our discussion of lexical simplification.

Five of the six strategies described as process-initiating have been reported in previous research:

I 1) Superordinate terms

Varadi describes this strategy as an example of "message reduction" [1] that involves "generalization". Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976) consider it equivalent to the strategy they name "lexical substitution".

Ickenroth (1975) reports the use of superordinate terms in cases when the required specific word is unknown. The way in which this strategy can lead to lexical fossilization is dealt with in some detail in Levenston and Blum (1977). For its use in other linguistic contexts see section 2 below.

I 2) Approximation

The term is used by Vāradi (1973) to refer to the type of "message reduction" exemplified by the use of "rope" instead of "clothes-line". Both types of Vāradi's "message reduction" are included by Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976) within the category of "lexical substitution". Their definition of "lexical substitution" is broad enough to cover both "superordinate terms" and "approximation"; we feel the two should be clearly differentiated (see section 3 below).

I 3) Synonyms

Reported by Ickenroth (1975) as a strategy for replacing unknown words on a translation-test. We ourselves found (Levenston and Blum 1977) a persistent preference for the register-neutral member of a pair of synonyms among advanced learners. See also section 4 below.

I 4) Word-coinage

The term is used by Vāradi (1973) for cases like "airball" instead of "balloon". The same strategy is referred to by Ickenroth (1975) as "derivations-composite-words".

I 5) Converseness

Discussed by us (Levenston and Blum 1977) though not reported elsewhere, so far as we know.

II Transfer

The literal translation of mother tongue lexical forms into the second language structure is reported by Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976). See also section 5.

1) This label, we feel, is unfortunate in that it refers to the effect on communication, and different strategies can produce the same effect; in most cases of lexical simplification there will be some kind of message reduction. Our own terminology attempts to define strategies at least group a in terms of the underlying semantic relationships exploited by the learner/teacher/translator.

Group b

We include in this group situation-bound strategies of communication which, though they can each be used repeatedly, do not necessarily point to linguistic processes in the interlanguages.

I Circumlocution and paraphrase

Váradi (1973) lists "circumlocution and description" under the heading "former replacement". Tschenroth (1975) reports the use of paraphrase. See section 6.

II Language switch

Transporting a native word or expression, untranslated, into the interlanguage utterance is listed by Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) as a type of avoidance strategy.

III Appeal to Authority

Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976) define "appeal to authority", as the case "when the learner asks someone else to supply a form or lexical item, asks if a form or item is correct, or else 'looks it up' in a dictionary". Since this pattern is restricted to face to face communication, it could not appear in our data, which was elicited through a written test, and we shall not deal with it here. Note, however, that appeal to authority, in the sense of consulting a dictionary or a thesaurus, is as popular and useful a strategy with translators as with language learners.

IV Change of topic

Described by Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker as either a change of topic or no verbal response on the part of the learner on topics for which he lacks the target language rules or words, and called by them "topic avoidance". We prefer not to use the word avoidance in referring to this strategy, since it does not fit the general pattern of uses of the word set up in our taxonomy.

V Semantic avoidance

Defined by Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) as "talking about related concepts which may presuppose the desired context", and considered an avoidance strategy, in cases when the learner is confronted with the need to communicate content for which he lacks the appropriate target language rules and forms. Five examples of this strategy are given in Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976).

The preceding survey of nomenclature has considered strategies of simplification only in the context of language learning. The following discussion will compare the use of five of these strategies - superordinate terms, approximation, synonymy, transfer and circumlocution and paraphrase - in the three different linguistic contexts chosen, starting always with translation and proceeding to simplified texts, teachers and learners. All examples of simplification by learners are derived from the data obtained in our previous study of lexical simplification, where learners were required a) to fill in lexical gaps in text sentences and b) to translate into their mother tongue a list of words which included all those used by native speakers to complete the same set of test sentences (Levenston and Blum, 1977).

2. Superordinate Terms

Semantic competence for a native speaker includes the ability to recognize when relations of hyponymy exist between items in the lexical system, and when a number of items have a common "superordinate" which can replace them.

Hence the translator, confronted with semantic voids, can exploit such relations between items in the lexical system of the target language, and try to convey the source language meaning by using the superordinate term in the target language. "Unqualified",[1] the use of the superordinate term alone always results in the depletion of meaning. The following examples are taken from English translations of Hebrew texts.

1. I'll wait for the news (Dagut 1971:86)

"News" here is the textual translation-equivalent of "besora", a word that in Hebrew has the semantic component "+ good".

2. It now become apparent that the man in civilian dress..." (Dagut 1971:85)

The original Hebrew word "almoni" has no equivalent in English. Its semantic components are "human" and "name unknown". By using the superordinate term "man" the translation obviously depletes the explicit meaning, though in the total context the missing component can perhaps be inferred.

Effective use of superordinate terms is probably at its highest in text simplification, and other examples of intra-language "translation" when relations of hypernymy and hyponymy within the same language can be exploited:

3. he'elu et ha'alunka'al ha‿tender/samu...
They lifted the stretcher on the truck/They put...

4. haxoveset he‿'ira .../ haxoveset amra...
The nurse pointed out/ the nurse said...

1) "Qualifiers" is the technical term used by Wonderly (1968) for explanatory additions to a word in translation.

It is important to note that substitutions of this kind are context-bound and do not always work out of context.

As we tried to show in our earlier article (Levenston and Blum, 1977), it is these same relations of superordination and co-hyponymy that are likely to be recognized by the language lerner as part of the general process of lexical simplification. Specifically, we claimed that advanced learners, who have at their disposal some or all of the co-hyponyms at the disposal of the native speaker, tend to use a word set up as superordinate in their interlanguage in contexts where the majority of the native speakers use a co-hyponym (sameah (happy) for sameah/meusar/meruce(happy/content/satisfied)). Looking at the data again, and this time at the answers of those learners who did not know the required word in each sentence, we found that the use of appropriate or non-appropriate superordinates was a major strategy for overcoming lack of vocabulary. This applies to all the test sentences, not only those set up to test the hyponymy hypothesis:

5. hu haya muxan leqabel beraçon et ha'aḥrayut še samti 'alav
He was ready to accept the responsibility that had been put upon him.

6. ani miçtaer šehu lo qibel et drišat hašalom mimxa, pašut šaxaḥti lehagid
I'm sorry he didn't receive your kind regards, I simply forgot to say.

As before, the results vary in acceptability. "samti" in sentence 5, though superordinate to "hitalti" ("imposed" - the required word) is in no way acceptable, and was not used by any of the Israelis. In sentence 6, however, though the required word - limsor - was supplied by 77.5% of the Israelis, [illegible] the 23.5% who did not use it, one used "lehagid" and another "lomar", both superordinate to "limsor" in this context. This provides further evidence for the claim that strategies of simplification are basically universal in nature and are often used by native speakers, even when addressing other natives, and in contexts where the need for simplification is by no means obvious.

One kind of use of superordinate terms among learners is based on the semantic relationship of converseness:

hu —— hirbe kesef.

7. hem natnu lo 'avoda tova; ~~hu hirbe kesef~~.
They gave him a good job; ~~he ... a lot of money~~. he —— a lot of money.
Of those learners who did not know the required word (hirviah/earned), 56.6% used qibel/received. Here it is the presence of natnu/gave in the first part of the test sentence that probably influenced the choice of its converse in the sentence completion. Similarly, one student supplied natnu/gave as a completion of sentence 5 even though the resulting structure is obviously unacceptable grammatically (...natnu 'alav/ gave on him).

This brief comparison of the use of the same strategy in different contexts may be summed up by three observations:

i) the use of superordinate terms can be effective in all three linguistic contexts.

ii) the dangers to communication involved are depletion and inappropriate usage.

iii) the same range of degrees of success in the use of this strategy can be found in all compared linguistic contexts, and is not specific to the language learning situation.

3. Approximation

The term is used here as in translation theory: "the selection of words whose area bounds upon the blank space and which by insertion into the context of the word they are made to translate will suggest to the reader the association of that word" (Rabin : 1958). In both the following examples the need for approximation derives from the use of the source of the Hebrew word ḥupa , "bridal canopy", in contexts where the reference is clearly to the act of marriage:

8. nikhnasnu laḥupa - we were married.
(lit. we came under the bridal canopy).
Here the translation has nothing of the specifically Jewish religio-cultural meaning, but the effect of this depletion is barely felt by the reader in the target language.

9. ko zakhu lehagi'a laḥupa - (... how many girls) never reached the canopy..
Here the translation is probably quite obscure to the most readers, especially those with no knowledge of Jewish marriage customs.

We find a similar range of effect when the technique is used in text-simplification .

10. ha'yatom omer "qadiš" → ha'ben omer "qadiš".
(The orphan says the kadish → The son says the kadish.

11. kofe 'otam le'exol → omer lahem le'exol
(Forces them to eat → tells them to eat)

Compared on a word to word basis one can find partial synonymy between 'yatom' (orphan) and 'ben' (son) but no such relationship between 'kofe' (forces) and 'omer' (tells). Still, though depleted both referentially and connotationaly, the basic sentence meaning is transmitted in both examples.

One danger of using approximation in the classroom is that it may lead to misunderstanding. When a teacher asks

12. at roca latet et haḥeder ?
Would you like to give your room?

meaning "rent it", the student may in fact both misunderstand her and learn a deviant collocation.

The examples of the use of approximation in our own data show that when used by learners the effects on communication vary from unacceptability to complete obscurity:

13. ani ḥošev šenatnu lo maspiq hizdamnuyot.
haçara hi šehu lo yodea ex lefateaḥ otan.
I think he's been given enough opportunities. The trouble is that he doesn't know how to develop them...

"lefateaḥ hizdamnuyot" /develop opportunities is as unusual collocationally in Hebrew as in English, but the word does have a semantic component (+use) in common with the appropriate item (lenaçel/exploit), so the meaning the learner is trying to convey by approximation is clear and appropriate.

But this technique was not always so successful:

14. hem natnu lo avoda tova. hu hasax/asaf harbe kesef.
They gave him a good job. He saved/gathered a lot of money.

The word needed in the context and supplied by 68% of the Israelis was "hirviaḥ" (earned). In using "hasax"(saved) and "asaf(gathered)", the learners avoid the proper term - which they do not know - by presupposing it, since in this context "saving" money implies receiving a good salary. But whereas the sentence with hasax is acceptable in Hebrew - "hasax/save" collocates with "kesef/money" - the sentence with "asaf/gathered" is not, neither in English nor in Hebrew.

Tarone, Frauenfelder and Selinker (1976) define a similar example in their data as "semantic avoidance" i.e. "not talking about concepts for which the vocabulary is not available, but rather talking about related concepts and presupposing the derived concept". Though the examples of "hasax" and "asaf" fall neatly into this category, we do not think they deserve to be classified as representative of a unique strategy, since they are not different from other cases of approximation.

Rabin's definition of approximation in translation emphasizes the importance of the context in suggesting to the reader (or hearer) the desired meaning. Rewritten to cover its use in all the linguistic contexts under discussion, the definition might read: "using a word in the target language (or simplified text) which does not convey the concept required in the context - a concept for which a single term may exist that is commonly used by native speakers - but which shows enough semantic elements with the derived concept to more or less convey its meaning in the given context".

4. Synonymy

The use of"common-level" or "familiar" synonyms is considered by Wonderly (1968) the easiest solution to the lexical problems that arise in preparing Bible translations for popular use. In the common language versions he quotes, "remained" is replaced by "stayed", "chanced" by "happened", and "fetters" by "chains". Simplified reading texts for language learners use the same technique when they replace register-marked but infrequent words by their unmarked, more frequent synonym; in Hebrew the literary form "natal" is regularly replaced by the common "lakah". - they both mean "take", and differ only in stylistic level.

In both these linguistic contexts the use of synonyms is aimed at improving readability by increasing the number of familiar words. To ensure successful preservation of the original meaning of the text, replacements must be limited to words that differ in frequency and/or register but not in semantic content. Even then, especially when the original text has literary value, the simplification version is bound to change the connotative meaning:

15. yehudi niftar →yehudi met
A Jew passes away → A Jew dies. (Blum:1972)

The word "niftar" in Hebrew means literally "to get rid of", and there is a metaphoric expression "niftar min ha'olam" - "getting rid of the world" - used as a synonym for dying. "Niftar" may also be used alone with the same meaning; it then carries an echo of the fuller expression, a connotative lead that is absent from the unmarked term "met". Though the conceptual content remains the same, there is a loss in connotation that seems to be the inevitable outcome of such synonym replacement in simplified texts.

A more complex situation arises in translation when the translator has to make a choice among synonyms or near-synonyms in the target language, none of which correspond to the source language term along all the dimensions of register, connotation and referential meaning. Typical of translation into Hebrew is the need to choose between two synonyms, both clearly marked for register, as equivalent for an unmarked word in the original.

16. "I told your father you'd probably call last night" (J.D.Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Banana fish).

In translating "probably", the translator has to choose between betah , which is very colloquial, and bevadai which is semi-formal. The result in both cases is a change of register to either too colloquial or too formal, the two tendencies that prevail in most translations of English dialogue into Hebrew.

In language teaching the common-level words are often taught first because of their high frequency. Hence it is not surprising that their relative frequency in the learner's interlanguage presupposes their relative frequency in commonly acceptable native usage even in advanced stages, when the learner knows more than one alternative.

Three of the sentences in the sentence completion test in our study (Levenston and Blum 1977) were devised to test this hypothesis. All three were phrased in a way that marked them for register. We expected the native speakers of Hebrew to prefer in each case the word appropriate to the style, and the non-natives to disregard this constraint. Both groups conformed - in one case, for example, given by the context a possible choice between 'natal' (formal and marked for "wash") and 'rahac' (unmarked frequent for 'wash') 85% of the Isrealis used 'natal', versus only 38% of those learners who knew - i.e. could translate at sight - both words.

Interestingly, though the majority of Israelis chose the expected, marked, term there were always some (in the case of "natal" - 12.5%) who chose the unmarked. Awareness of synonymy is a component of semantic competence. It is used by learners as a strategy for a simple task of sentence completion. And it is this same strategy of simplification that is used deliberately by the native speaker when he wishes to simplify for others.

Of course, for the language lerner whose second language vocabulary is still very limited, the choice between synonyms may not exist. If in his interlanguage there is just one term for the needed concept, then that is the one he is going to use. Thus 82.1% of the learners who did not know "natal" (in the sense of "wash") used rahac instead.

Altogether there seem to exist three distinct kinds of situation that may develop with respect to the use of synonyms in a learner's interlanguage:

i) Of a pair of synonyms that differ in register only,(e.g. natal/rahac) the more frequent is learned first and as a result, its relative frequency in the learner's interlanguage is greater, at all stages, than in normal usage by native speakers. But this does not lead to inappropriate usage.

ii) A pair of synonyms share the same components of meaning but differ in register and take different collocations. The learner, aware of only one of the pair, uses it regardless of collocational and stylistic restrictions. The result is often inappropriate usage e.g. "a beautiful man"... used by a learner who does not know the word "handsome".

iii) Two words that share most of their semantic components but are not true synonyms become such in the learner's interlanguage semantic system and are used interchangeably. In the written exercises of one student in one week we found such interchangeability in the use of "diber (speak)" and "amar(say)":

17. Lama at medaberet se'at lo yexola lalexet?
    (Why do you speak that you can't go?)
18. hem [illegible] sehabdikot yekarot...
    (They say that the tests are expensive...)
19. Im ani makir otax tov adaber se ...
    (If I know you well, I'll speak that...)

Clearly for this student "diber" can be used in the same contexts as "amar."

5. Transfer

All second language learners probably begin by assuming that for every word in their mother tongue there is a single translation - equivalent in the second language. More precisely, perhaps, the assumption of word-for-word translation-equivalence as a working hypothesis - "thinking in the mother-tongue" - is the only way a learner can ever begin to communicate in a second language. Mastery of the second language involves the gradual abandonment of the equivalence hypothesis, the internalization of the semantic relationships in the second language independently of their first - language equivalent, the ability to"think in the second language".

If, then, by lexical transfer we mean attributing to a lexical item of the second language all the functions - referential and conceptual meaning, connotation, collocability, register-restriction - of its assumed first language translation-equivalent, then it is not a strategy of avoidance but a strategy of communication, in fact the means whereby communication becomes possible. "Positive" transfer is also probably the main way we increases our control of the second language vocabulary. Take the word "way" itself. One English-speaking student of Hebrew was observed to use the word "derekh" in the context "lo zu haderekh la'asot et ha'avodah (that's not the way to do the work)", though the word had only been encountered for the first time a few days earlier in class in its literal topographical sense - "haderekh mikan lehefa (the way from here to Haifa)". One may, however, place too great a reliance on transfer and fail to realize its limitations. Even the professional translato r may remain too tied to his source language and produce the kind of transfer effect known as translatorese. Dagut (19 7) quotes the following example:

20. (After your denial gets published,), a stone
drops from the heart - yoredet 'even min halev.
The common Hebrew idiom, expressive of great emotional relief, has been"transfered" to English, where it has very little meaning or impact.

Such errors in published translations are, or should be, rare. In learner's utterances, by contrast, they are or should be common; without such errors, and their subsequent correction, no progress can be made. To give just one example, after transferring the Hebrew "na'alei 'avoda" to English as "work-shoes" the learner discovers the need in English, not found in Hebrew, to distinguish between "shoes" and "boots".

"Work-shoes" is an unacceptable loan-translation. Legitimate loan-translations are those lexical transfers that have acquired respectability. Whereas English borrowed "Kindergarten" from German, Hebrew transferred the word as "gan yeladim", "garden of children", preserving even the plural of Kinder (Rabin: 1958)

Some kinds of borrowing may also be classified as transfer, though for learners a careful distinction must be made here between transfer and language switch. If a learner, attempting to communicate in the second language, uses a term from his mother tongue and makes no attempt to adjust either the morphology or the phonology, he is employing the strategy we have labelled "language switch". This too is a strategy common to learners and translators, who, when faced with a lexical void in the target language, resort to italicized translation of the source language term, with or without footnotes and a glossary. If, however, the learner creates appropriate second-language morphology and phonology, he may be said to have resorted to transfer. At best he may hit on a form already borrowed, already accepted in the target language. At worst, he will produce a pseudo-borrowing, a form possessing all the features of a genuine borrowing except acceptability. Our own elicitation procedures did net one example of this type: ekstati.
A third possibility in the creation of false cognates. This of course is always likely to happen when the word in question originated in the second language, was borrowed into the learner's first language with a changed meaning, and is then translated back by the unsuspecting Israeli student of English, e.g. : "I took a tramp from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv" (English "tramp" is used in Hebrew in the sense of "lift, free ride"). The same effect may be produced through processes akin to loan-translation e.g. when a Hebrew - speaker translates "lašon hara" word by word as "bad language", not knowing that the correct English term for "lašon hara" is "slander".
Between pairs of languages more closely related than English and Hebrew, the existence of cognates, real and apparent, is a well-known source for errors of transfer; for a detailed attempt at sub-categorizing these phenomena, see Nash: 1974.

Finally, a word about the use of transfer by teachers in the classroom. One would not normally expect such a phenomenon to occur. Unlike translators, teachers can avoid the problems of lexical voids, or difficulties forced upon them by unknown texts. Unlike learners they tend to be at home in both languages. Nevertheless, we have seen teachers indulging in transfer.

Faced with the need to describe grammatical phenomena, and realizing that the Hebrew term would be unfamiliar to the learner, a Hebrew teacher talked about the [subjekt] of a sentence, pronouncing the word as it would be if a normal borrowing. But it is a pseudo-borrowing; Hebrew-speakers do not normally use the word in a grammatical sense. Such transfers are most likely to occur with "international" words, especially in heterogeneous classes with more than one mother tongue.

6. Circumlocution and Paraphrase

The translation of a high-level word by a descriptive phrase is recommended by Wonderly (1968) as a useful solution in Bible translations for popular use, especially in cases where theological, cultural and other technical terms are involved. Among his examples are:
repent → turn away from your sins, blasfema (blasphemes) → ofende a Dios con sus palabros (offends God with his words), fiel (faithful) → siempre cople sus promesos (always keeps his promises). (Wonderly, 1968). From a semantic point of view the technique involved is the separate specification of component features.

When used in dictionary definitions, and thus context-free, circumlocutions are expected to specify all the semantic features of the defined word: "island - a tract of land surrounded by water". In translations, text - simplifications and learners speech, circumlocutions are never context-free, and hence tend to vary in their degree of accuracy, if considered as definitions of the words they replace. In translation proper, circumlocution may be replaced by paraphrase, which does not necesssarily specify even all those semantic components required by the context; such periphrastic renderings are a last resort, employed mainly in cases of "cultural voids":

21. tihye mitzvah levaqer eẓlo bevet ḥolim.
It would be a good deed to visit him in hospital.

A "mitzvah" in Hebrew is a religious commandment, either positive (Honour thy father and thy mother ...) or negative (Thou shalt not covet...). Whereas the fulfilment of many positive "mitzvot" - including the commandment to visit the sick - would qualify as a "good deed", this paraphrase contains neither the semantic component "duty", nor the essential connotation "+ religious".
Among the descriptive phrases used by Hebrew text simplifications (Blum 1972) we found very few examples of true circumlocution. One example that actually does have the features of a context-free, dictionary defintion was the following:

22. 'od miyalduta → 'od min hayamim sehajta yalda qetana
(from her childhood → since she was a little girl).

In most cases, however, the descriptive phrases used in text-simplification are context-bound, and semantically not fully comprehensive:

23. ulai tictaref elenu → ulai tavo gam ata itanu
(would you join us → would you come with us too).

Such periphrastic renderings can at best supply the referential meaning of the original. When the connotative meaning is an important feature of the original, the text-simplifier and the translator are in trouble. In the following example the informality and direct criticism found in the source are replaced by a rather formal, not to say pedantic, use of irony in a periphrastic translation that completely changes the tone of the original:

24. ... said it didn't seem very "spunky" of Mr. Irving...
hikriz al hamore šelo hir'a simanei gvura yetera
(declared that the teacher did not show signs of being over-heroic)

(From Upton Sinclair Oil , and the translation by M. Avishai 1929 quoted in Toury : 197?)

Teachers also use paraphrase, both to avoid unknown lexical items and to introduce new ones. Used skilfully this is obviously a useful tool of lexical simplification in language teaching. On the other hand, the price paid for misuse of this strategy in teaching is higher than in translation. An unsuccessful paraphrase in translation will affect the accuracy and acceptability of one specific text. An unsuccessful paraphrase offered as explanation in class may lead the student to misapprehend the meaning of a word and thus later to misuse it. One teacher explained šekhuna (neighborhood) as "makom šeyeš harbe binyanim (where there are lots of houses)", leading students to think it meant "a built-up area".

The other danger, common to all strategies of simplification, is that the distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable usage is blurred. A "kennel/meluna" may be a "dog's house/bayit šel kelev", but only the single word is normal usage in either language. When the teacher systematically avoids lexical item by paraphrase, he often uses collocations unacceptable in normal circumstances. The learner, lacking any independent criteria for judging degrees of acceptability in the target language accepts the teacher's usage as the norm, not realizing that he is thereby widening the gap between his interlanguage and the target language. This danger is not specific to the use of paraphrase. All strategies of lexical simplification may have this unwished-for effect. We mention it here because it is often the misuse of circumlocution by learners that produces the oddest interlanguage uses, and it is important to remember that the use of this strategy by learners is clearly encouraged by its use as a teaching device.

The nature of the elicitation procedures used in our own study (Levenston and Blum 1976) did not much allow for the use of circumlocution; the test given required the completion of sentences, with single blanks for single missing words. Nevertheless, learners did use a special kind of circumlocution, one that entailed the use of two words instead of one:

25. zarqu oto me ha'universita ki hu _____ bekol habhinot.
They expelled him from the university because he _____ in all the exams.

Instead of the required word "nikhšal" (failed), students wrote "lo hicliah" (did not succeed). This technique is also well-known to translators. By exploiting the various semantic relationships of "oppositeness" of meaning (to use Lyons' 1968 terminology), translators can solve the problem of lexical voids in the target language. Just as "she is not married" is an intra-language translation of "she is single", so the same device can be used for translating "single" into a language that lacks such a term.

7. Conclusion

Lexical simplification, we believe, is based on universal principles of semantic competence; this article has presented a preliminary survey of some empirical evidence for this hypothesis. The preliminary nature of our inquiry is only too obvious:

i) the categories of the taxonomy proposed could be sub-classified with even greater delicacy. In particular the different kinds of oppositeness (Lyons: 1968) and hyponymy (Cruse: 1975) need to be taken more fully into account.

ii) we have not examined all the contexts of linguistic simplification. In particular, the evidence from pidginization and creolization should be compared for similar phenomena (Schuman: 1974).

iii) we have not compared <u>all</u> the strategies and processes postulated, even within the three contexts chosen. However, without presenting detailed examples for each category, it is possible to summarize in tabular form the extent of occurrences of each strategy, in each of the three contexts.

Summary of strategies

Strategy	lang.learning	translation	simplified texts
I. Avoidance			
morphological	+	-	+
phonological	+	-	-
graphological	+	-	-
void-avoidance	+	+	+
topic "	+	-	+
semantic "	+		
circumlocution	+	+	+
II. Overgeneralization			
use of super-ordinate	+	+	+
synonyms	+	+	+
approximation	+	+	+
derivations	+	+	-
III. Transfer	+	+ (Loan translation)	-
IV. Lang. switch	+	+ (transcription)	-

REFERENCES

Blum, Shoshana. 1972, Easy Hebrew as Means for Teaching Hebrew to Adults; Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Jerusalem.

Cruise, D.A. 1975, Hyponymy and lexical hierarchies in Campbell I.M. and Mitchel T.F. (eds.) Archivum Linguisticum Vol VI.

Dagut, Menachem, B. 1971, A linguistic Analysis of Some Semantic Problems of Hebrew-English Translation; Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Jerusalem.

Ickenroth, Jacques, 1975, On the Elusiveness of Interlanguage; Progress Report, Utrecht.

Kleinman, Howard, 1976, The Strategy of Avoidance in Adult Second Language Acquisition; Paper presented at the Summer Conference on Second language learning and Teaching, Oswego.

Levenston, E.A. and Blum Shoshana, 1977, Aspects of lexical simplification in the speech and writing of advanced adult learners; in Actes du 5eme Colloque de Linguistique Appliquée de Neuchâtel, Droz, Genève.

Lyons, John. 1968, Introduction to Theoretical linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nash, Rose, 1974, Phantom cognates and other curiosities in Puertorican Englanol; Paper presented at the TESOL Convention, Denver, Colorado, March.

Rabin, Chaim, 1958, The linguistics of translation in A.H. Smith (ed); Aspects of Translation; Studies in communication, London.

Schuman, John, H. 1974, The implications of interlanguage, pidginization and creolization for the study of adult language acquisition; TESOL Quarterly 8. 145-152.

Tarone, Elaine, Cohen, Andrew D. and Dumas Guy, 1976, "A closer look at some interlanguage terminology: A framework for communication strategies"; Working Papers on Bilinguism, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 9 pp. 76-90.

Tarone, Elaine Frauenfelder, Uli and Selinker Larry, 1976, Systematicity/variability and stability/instability in interlanguage systems; In H. Douglas Brown (ed.), Papers in Second language Acquisition (Special Issue no.4, Language Learning).

Toury, Gideon, 1977, Norms of Literary Translation into Hebrew, 1930-1945; Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Tel Aviv University.

Váradi, Tamás, 1973, Strategies of target language learner communication: Message adjustment. Paper presented at the Sixth Conference of the Roumanian-English linguistic Project in Timisoara.

Wonderly, William, L. 1968, Bible Translations for Popular Use. United Bible Societies.